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The girls of Dragalevtsy had no way of proposing to a boy. The girl waited and, if nobody proposed to her, she remained unmarried.

Sometimes unmarried young people had sexual intercourse. If the boy did not want to marry the girl, then she told her parents; the boy was brought before the *Obshtina* and, if the charge was proved, was made to marry the girl. As one peasant said in matchless understatement: "In such cases they do not have a happy life."

One such case occurred during my sojourn in the village and was an exciting topic of conversation. A girl with an unsavory reputation, in the hope of gaining a certain young man as a husband, accused him of having had intimate relations with her; the parents, too, insisted upon his marrying their daughter. He refused and the matter was taken up before the village court, where several of his friends swore that they likewise had had intimate relations with the same girl. Whether the friends swore truthfully or falsely was still a matter of doubt in the minds of many villagers, but the young man was freed from all responsibility in the matter.

Chastity ranked high in the scale of village social values. Even though some couples had illicit relationships before they married, they were running a grave social risk. Public indignation was especially great in the case of illegitimacy. A girl giving birth to an illegitimate child was forced to leave the village. On this subject I had the following conversation with one of the more respected villagers:

"Where does the girl go if she is driven out of the village?"

"She goes to Sofia because she's a bad girl."

"Do the villagers try to find out who the father was and punish him for his part?"

"The father? Why should they? The girl is to blame, not the man."

"Are many illegitimate children born in the near-by villages?"

"In my time [the last thirty-five years] there have been two in Bistritsa, one in Dragalevtsy, and none in Simeonovo."

There was no particular stigma attached to being a widow or a widower, but the village mores decreed that, when remarrying, widows had to choose widowers, and vice versa. The explanation for this went back to the villagers' belief of the afterlife. They thought of

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[775] 587 Heaven in concrete terms and believed that husbands and wives would be reunited there. Things would work out quite well mathematically if a widow and widower remarried each other, since in Heaven each mate would go to the first spouse, thus avoiding the unheavenly complication of a second mate left alone for eternity. For a second wife, they listened to the recommendations of neighbors far more than they did when marrying the first time. This was borne out by the testimony of a woman I found picking berries from a bush that overhung a garden wall. While speaking to me she kept a watchful eye turned toward the near-by house in fear that someone would tell her to leave the berries alone. "How did you happen to marry Nikola?" I asked her. Like the other women she seemed to welcome a chance to talk about herself.

"For three years I was a widow in Simeonovo before somebody recommended me to my present husband, at that time a widower living here in Dragalevtsy. One day he came over to Simeonovo, looked me up, and asked me to marry him. I accepted right away although I had never heard of him before. Winter was coming on and I didn't have any money to buy food for myself and my little boy. I went immediately home with him and lived with him as his wife for two months before we were married."

Her second husband was one of the poorest men in the village, and her life was decidedly unhappy; yet to the village way of thinking, she was better off than as a widow.

593 Most of these second marriages turned out successfully provided the question of stepchildren could be satisfactorily settled. Sometimes fathers sent away their own children to a relative and gladly took in those of the second wife. Quite often the children of both the husband and wife were brought up together as one family. A second wife was generally anxious to have children by her second husband in order to ensure her place in his affections, especially if she had children by her first husband who ate up the food and wore the clothes provided by their stepfather.

587 837 Widows and widowers were permitted by public opinion to live together as though they were married for awhile before the actual ceremony took place. This above all else emphasized the fact that

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second marriages were entered into because of convenience and necessity. But such tolerance was not shown to the previously unmarried. 587 837

In Dragalevtsy children married according to age, the oldest first. If a younger child wanted to marry before his brother, he had to buy permission, but in no case was a son or daughter supposed to have the customary wedding celebration before an older sister married, the only chance being an elopement followed by a very simple ceremony. 582

Most girls and men in Dragalevtsy married between the twentieth and the twenty-fifth year. At the time of the last census (1934) there were only one married man and eighteen married women under twenty. Men had begun to marry later than they had ten years before, although there seemed to be no such well-defined trend for the women.

Since marriage was the normal channel for sex expression, an enamored couple thought readily of a wedding. When they reached an understanding, they considered themselves engaged and sought parental approval. Of the thirty representative families that I studied, eighteen, or more than half, were engaged one week. Only two couples were engaged for longer than two weeks. 584

The engagement did not grant the couple any privileges of intimacy; indeed, the boy was not allowed to visit with the girl until the wedding. His sisters and relatives went to call upon her, or, if she had been stolen and was in his home, his parents kept the girl away from him until the day of the wedding. Therefore, the engagement period did not give the young couple any chance of getting better acquainted; it simply gave the families an opportunity to prepare for the wedding a week later. Whenever a wedding was to take place, someone usually sent a message to me at the College, and if possible I attended. As a foreigner I was attracted to those customs that were bizarre; so to offset this I persuaded three peasants of different ages and from different families to give me separately a complete description of the typical wedding. This showed me which points they thought most important and served as a check to my observations.

A wedding was a village affair, the parents of the girl inviting all of those who had previously invited them as well as those whose invitations they would like to receive. This meant the laying in of large 585

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to return or remain, the girl decided to go back to her parents. In 1937 this would have made her ineligible, in a sense, for further consideration as a wife. Now she simply explained that when the boy had asked her in advance if she would marry him she had thought that he was joking and told him "Yes," in what she considered to be a jesting manner. She was greatly surprised two weeks later to find that the boy had been serious. The whole affair turned out happily in the end because within another two weeks the young man had found a willing girl, had become engaged to her, and married her.

Another evidence that the family system was having to change to meet the stress of new times was the lack of social disapproval shown to widows and widowers who married persons previously unmarried. Heretofore, only widows and widowers could marry each other, and this was chiefly because of economic necessity. Although not yet common, it was a growing practice for a widower to take a fancy to a girl whom he later married. The age of marriage was becoming lower, dropping to 18 and 19 years for many of the couples. The engagement period still lasted only one or two weeks, a time sufficient to allow the girl to make her wedding preparations.

Accompanying these changes was a greater freedom among the young people both in relation to each other and in relation to their parents. The *sedenki* for young people followed practically the same patterns which I had previously observed but had not yet popularized the kissing games which featured *sedenki* in northern Bulgaria. Clandestine love-making was increasing as was the tendency on the part of the young people to pair off.

The changed relationship of sons to their fathers was shown by the failure of many of the sons to turn over their earnings to their parents as part of the common family treasury. Formerly more than half of the young men had followed this practice, but estimates in 1945 placed the number at approximately one out of ten.

Of especial interest was the pattern which younger couples were establishing after marriage. Whereas, ten years ago even the young wife would have given implicit obedience to her husband's orders, today many of the families were becoming equalitarian. The older women, however, still clung to the patriarchal pattern, though they